

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

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This is a new feature in the newsletter. I want to highlight a few things that I think will interest you. The performance results recently reported to the US Department of Education indicated great work by service coordinators, early intervention providers and POE Managers. Kentucky is not perfect but boy, are we doing good! Let me share some data from the compliance indicators with you:

- Indicator 1 is the percentage of children who receive initial (new) early intervention services within 30 days of the IFSP date. Out of 7,012 new services, 99.87% were delivered timely. Only 45 new services were delivered late.
- Indicator 7 is the percentage of children who were referred, found eligible and had an IFSP developed within 45 days of referral. Out of 3,133 children, 98.79% met the timeline. Only 38 initial IFSPs were developed late.
- Indicator 8C is the percentage of children potentially eligible for special education services (Part B) exited First Steps with a timely transition conference. Out of 2,932 children, 99.83% had timely transition planning. Only 5 children had a late transition conference.

The indicators that are considered "results" indicators are also outstanding:

- Indicator 3 is the percentage of children who have improved outcomes in positive social skills and relationships, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors. Kentucky met all targets!
- Indicator 4 is the percentage of families that report that early intervention helped them know their rights, effectively communicate their child's needs and helped them learn how to support their child's development. Kentucky exceeded all targets!

I share this with you in hopes that you appreciate the enormity of these accomplishments. These results reflect the efforts of a whole state of people committed to supporting children and families! We still need to work on child find. We are obligated to find all children who are eligible for First Steps services and this is an area that POEs have been working on for the past couple of years. With your help, we will meet the targets for percentage of children participating in First Steps as well.

Now we are tasked by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs to dig deeper and focus on quality. Compliance is not enough—we must provide high quality services that result in improved child outcomes. During the next five years we will need to continue the great work we have started but really commit to improving the actual practice that occurs between provider and parent. So there will be changes expected in the performance by service coordinators and early intervention providers. You will learn more about the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) as it develops. This will be a wonderful opportunity to grow as an early intervention provider.

Paula



STATE LEAD AGENCY UPDATE

State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report

The recent submission of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) this year marks the beginning of a new state performance plan cycle. Many of the indicators that states must report remained the same but there is a new indicator that will drive much of the future work for First Steps. Indicator 11 requires the state to develop a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). A stakeholder group has been assisting the SLA in identifying a focus area to improve. The focus is referred to as the State-Initiated Measurable Result or SIM-R. The plan was submitted on March 30th, two days ahead of the deadline of by April 1, 2015.

Update: Preliminary Ideas for SSIP

Information presented below is draft and subject to change

SIM-R: If early intervention services are provided by teaching parents evidence-based strategies based on their routines and priorities, the families will increase their knowledge and skills in enhancing their children's development and growth. We will measure the change in provider's coaching skills and change in parent's perception of their ability to help their child grow and learn.

Focus: Indicator 4 C: Early Intervention helped parents learn how to help their children grow and develop.

SIM-R aligned with Race-to-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Priority #5: Family Engagement, KY Strengthening Families Initiative

Impact of Change in Family Share Fees

2015 brought changes to the Family Share participation fees. The regulatory change re-adjusted the fees charged per income category. For some families, the fees were reduced. For many others, the fees increased significantly. The range of fees is now \$0 to \$400 per month. Families who are required to pay Family Share fees also have an option to allow billing of insurance in lieu of paying the Family Share fee. Families who choose to continue paying Family Share received an invoice reflecting the new fees beginning in February.

Service Coordinators have been updating the families' choices regarding Family Share and use of insurance. There have been lots of questions! Financial resources are considered in First Steps—the program is not a “free” program. The State Lead Agency has received complaints from POEs and parents about early intervention providers telling the parent to not allow billing insurance. Some providers actually tell parents to do this so that the provider doesn't have to bill insurance. What is left out of the discussion is the result for the parent—they must pay the Family Share or risk no services, they must pay the deductible or co-pay. A few parents discovered that when they chose to pay Family Share instead of using insurance, the monthly fee was \$300 or higher per month. We have heard stories of providers encouraging families to not use First Steps at all—just come to their clinic for services. Then go to First Steps after the insurance visits are exhausted. Again, part of the information is not provided. First Steps provides coordination of services tailored to meet the needs of the family. Individual clinical therapy does not do this.

The full impact of the changes to the system of payments will not be known for several months. The future financial support for First Steps remains the same—no significant increase in federal or state funds. States that moved to a similar system of payments earlier than Kentucky are seeing a decrease in insurance support. There is no reason to believe Kentucky will be any different. Everyone will need to work together to maintain the system.

Families should expect to make financial decisions that are right for their family. Partial information and misinformation from anyone working in First Steps is not supporting families.

Referrals

A few issues have arisen concerning how referrals for early intervention services are made to providers. Referrals offered to a provider must be done in such a manner to prevent discrimination based on the financial resources of the family.

All providers sign an agreement that states:

- 1) Agree to comply with the civil rights requirements set forth in 45 CFR Parts 80, 84 and 90. The Cabinet shall make no payment to providers of service who discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or age in the provision of services.
- 2) Agree to serve all geographic areas of the counties indicated on the appropriate provider enrollment form, unless a waiver from this requirement is granted by the Cabinet.
- 3) Agree to accept First Steps client referrals without discrimination, including but not limited to children with public or private insurance coverage.

To prevent opportunities for discrimination, referrals to a provider must be offered “blind”—that is, offered to the potential provider based only on minimal information that does not violate anti-discrimination laws. For example, “Provider or Agency X, we have a child who needs a speech pathologist. Do you accept this referral?”

When referring, it is important that the Service Coordinator do this early enough in the process to allow providers—agencies and independents—to check their availability. The Service Coordinator needs to find out the family’s needs—can they receive services during the morning, afternoon or evening? Is there a day that works better than others?

The Service Coordinator can share this information to facilitate the finding of a provider:

- County—if a large county, can state east, west, north or south portion of the county
- Time or day restrictions if applicable—family can only receive services in the evening, on Wednesday mornings, etc. There is no need to share this type of information if the family states “any time will work”
- Specialized expertise such as experience with feeding issues. This must be handled carefully, the Service Coordinator can’t state the child’s medical condition or disability

Referrals to a provider that works for an agency must be made to the agency contact, not the individual provider.

Providers should expect Service Coordinators to contact them in timely manner that allows adequate time for the agency administrator or independent provider to verify availability to take the referral.

Doing Business with First Steps: Enrollment, Documentation, & Billing

A new document for early intervention providers will soon be available. *Doing Business with First Steps: Enrollment, Documentation, & Billing* is a manual that provides details to support effective business practices in First Steps. This manual outlines steps for enrollment, roles and responsibilities of early intervention providers, documentation of services, submission of claims, and payment. The manual was presented as a draft to the ICC for review and is now in the Department for Public Health approval process. Once approved, the manual will be posted on the First Steps website.



Online Referral Portal

An online referral portal goes live in soon that permits users to create an account, and then enter referrals for First Steps. Users will have access to basic statistics (number of referrals, number found eligible) and information on how to gain more information concerning specific children. Referrals will be sent to POEs based upon zip code.



The screenshot shows the login page for the Professional Referral Portal for Kentucky First Steps. At the top left is the First Steps logo. The main heading is "Professional Referral Portal for Kentucky First Steps" in blue. Below this is a message: "This portal is only for the use of our professional referral sources for Kentucky First Steps. Each office, daycare, school, etc., has one logon for entering referrals. Thank you for using the Professional Referral Portal." The login section includes a "Please Login:" label, a "User Name:" label, a "Password:" label, and a "Submit" button. There are also links for "Do not have a user name?", "Forget My Password", and "Create Logon".

Policy and Procedure Manual

The State Lead Agency is currently working on editing the Policy and Procedure Manual to match the new regulations that went into effect November 2014. The tentative date to have the manual finalized and posted is May 1, 2015. Training will be provided on the manual for both POE staff and providers.

Assessments in First Steps

Assessments serve many purposes in the First Steps program – to provide a snapshot of present strengths and needs of the child and family, to provide information for individualized intervention planning, and to provide a method for monitoring and reporting developmental progress. Federal regulations define assessment as the ongoing procedures used to identify the child's unique strengths and needs and the early intervention service appropriate to meet those needs throughout the child's eligibility in Part C.

All children in First Steps receive a five area assessment (5AA) upon entry to the program, annually, and at exit. Item level data from the criterion referenced assessment protocol must be entered into the Kentucky Early Childhood Data System (KEDS) prior to entering the assessment report in TOTS and billing for the service. This helps to ensure there is a sufficient number of records available when gathering information for the measurement of child progress as reported in the Annual Performance Report (APR).

The timeline for the completion of the annual and exit assessments were modified in state regulations. The annual assessment is to be completed no sooner than 60 days and no later than 30 days prior to the expiration of the current IFSP. The exit assessment must be completed within 30 days prior to the child's exit from First Steps. If the annual assessment was completed within 90 days prior to the child's exit there is no need to complete another assessment.

TRAINING INFORMATION



Face-to-Face Provider Orientation

May 5

June 9

Face-to-face orientation is held in Frankfort

REQUIRED

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Have you already completed the provider choice training requirement?

Thank you for doing so; however, please hold on to your certificates of completion. We do not need them at this time. You will send those with your contract renewal paperwork for the 2016-2018 contract period. Be on the look out early 2016 for announcements!

Still need to fulfill your provider choice requirement?

As trainings are received and approved by the SLA they will be posted on the First Steps website. The listing can be found it at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/firstSteps/needed+discipl.htm>. This listing is updated quarterly. Please check this listing first as the training you are interested in may have already been submitted and approved by the SLA.

Should the training not be on that list....Follow the steps below for consideration by the SLA:

Submit course (training session) information via email to chfs.firststeps@ky.gov Indicate "Training Approval Request" in the subject line.

The following information must be in the email in order to be considered for approval:

- Name of the participant(s)
- Discipline
- Course title
- Source (Copy of flyer, website, sponsoring agency)
- Registration information
- Detailed description of the course (agenda without descriptions of content for each topic is not acceptable.)
- Date
- Location
- Time
- Amount of credit to be earned (clock hours and/or C.E.U.'s)

Be sure to include ALL information about the training or approval may be delayed.

NEED TO UPDATE YOUR CONTRACT?

When submitting RF 6 Addendum forms to the State Lead Agency, please remember to list one provider per form. Recently, our office has received several addendum forms with requests for changes for multiple providers on the same form.

Please ensure that the form is filled out completely and correctly. This will allow timely processing. Incomplete and inaccurate forms cannot be processed.

If you have any questions, please contact Jenna Bobbitt at jennifer.bobbitt@ky.gov.

EXPIRED LICENSES



Have you recently renewed your professional license? You must ensure that the SLA has a current copy of your license. **Funds paid for services provided under an expired license will be recouped!**

When you renew your license, be sure to fax a copy to the SLA at 502-564-0329.

LATE NOTE ENTRY

When submitting late note requests, please send directly to chfs.firststeps@ky.gov. The subject line of your email should read: Late Note Request for TOTS id _____ [child's initials] for [name of your POE] POE.

Please allow time for processing. Sending multiple submittals of the same late note becomes confusing and causes a delay in completing the request.

WELCOME NEW SLA STAFF

Training & Technical Assistance

Erin Hawley has joined the First Steps Training and Technical Assistance Team. She is a former Service Coordinator from the Bluegrass Point of Entry.



First Steps Billing

For the first time ever we have three fulltime staff in the First Steps Billing Department. Please join us in welcoming them...

- Matt Krupp
- Shawn Bailey
- Julie Sandifer

With this transition we are asking that all billing inquiries be sent to the First Steps billing email address. This will ensure that the proper billing staff receives your email and address your need in a timely manner.

For all billing questions including TIBS questions and resubmissions

chfsfirststepsbilling@ky.gov

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



In 2015 the Infant-Toddler Institute will be held in three locations throughout the state. The east, west and central locations and dates can be found on the map. To learn more about a specific site go to <http://www.kentuckypartnership.org/InfantToddler/Home.aspx>

For First Steps approved sessions, please go to

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/firstSteps/needed+discipl.htm>

Family Scholarships Available to the Infant Toddler Institute



Family Scholarships are available on a first come first serve basis with limited spots available. In order to be eligible for the family scholarship the family must be raising a child between the ages of birth to five. Scholarships are available for the full institute or for a one day registration. Full institute scholarships include lodging for two nights, registration and meals. One day registration scholarships include lodging for one night, registration for one day and meals. All scholarships must be approved through Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc no later than the registration deadline. To apply for a scholarship or questions about eligibility please send an email of interest to Laura Beard at laura@kypartnership.org or call 502-875-1320. Please indicate which location (Paintsville, Frankfort or Bowling Green) you are interested in attending.

